

Homily of Feast of Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph Year A

The celebration of the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph is very significant because the family, which is the first institution God created, is under adverse pressure from modern relative, philosophical and psychological trends.

Each member of the Holy Family played a great role to making the family what it became, of which we are celebrating today. It was not Joseph's choice but God's will that he, Joseph, became Mary's guardian instead of being her husband as he had planned. In Bethlehem, Mary gave birth to Jesus in an animal shelter. Joseph became the foster father of Jesus. The family fled to Egypt to save Jesus from being killed by Herod. Today's Gospel narrates this incident, "When the magi had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.' Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'"

Then, came the three days search for Jesus when Jesus stayed back in Jerusalem after the Passover. Joseph was profoundly patient through all the hardships and challenges he and the entire family encountered. Jesus, who though was God, was obedient to Mary and Joseph. Mary, fully aware that she was the mother of God remained humble.

The Holy Family teaches us that difficulties and challenges instead of causing disintegration should make family members stick together and support one another, remembering that the family God that joined together nothing must put asunder (Mark 10:9). The Holy Family, also, teaches us that no hardship is beyond management where members of the family live in peace. Pope Paul VI says that the Holy Family is a school of Nazareth where we learn true science of life and higher wisdom of divine truths. Therefore, the Holy family is a model for biological families, Christian and church families, business, society and community families.

Parenting is a great responsibility and a blessing. The first reading states clearly the authority God gave to parents over their children, "God sets a father in honor over his children; a mother's authority he confirms over her [children]." Some parents relinquish this authority to their children and to trends in the society by letting their children do whatever pleases them, and have whatever they want. Some parents and trends in the society further encourage children's foolishness by shielding them from any form of discipline and control. This is bad for children because the Scripture says, "All children are foolish, but firm correction will make them change" (Proverbs 22:15). The first reading encourages children to be respectful, obedient and kind to their parents. On the other hand, St. Paul in the second reading instructs parents not to provoke (maltreat) their children.

Parents are able to impart discipline in their children if they themselves are disciplined. One of the major developmental problems children encounter nowadays is growing up in crises infested homes. St. Paul instructs in the second reading, "Wives, be subordinate to your husbands, as is proper in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and avoid any bitterness toward them." Some people may frown at the St. Paul's statement, "Wives, be subordinate (submit, be submissive, be in subjection, be subject) to your husbands." We need to understand that St. Paul wrote according to the exclusive patriarchal language of his time. However, the underlying message St. Paul communicates to us is that let there be respect and love, and avoidance of bitterness between husbands and wives.

Finally, St. Paul in the second reading lays out the virtues which forms the foundation of a healthy family; be it biological, religious, business, society or community family: "Put on ... heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

May the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph intercede for us that the word of God we read and hear may dwell in us richly and help us to produce lasting fruits in our various families. Amen.

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